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Request for Planning Monies
from the
John F. Kennedy Center
Charlestown, MA
March 16, 1988

CHARLESTOWN
R427
1988



THE KENNEDY CENTER
27 Winthrop St., Charlestown, Mass. 02129
(617) 241-8866

Nancy Keyes, President
Peter McClure, Vice - President
Mary Ann Chase - Borden, Treasurer
Jim Mansfield, Secretary



Katherine McDonough
Executive Director

March 16, 1988

Mr. Robert C. Farrell, Chairman
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Plaza
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Mr. Farrell:

Today the Board of Directors of the John F. Kennedy Family Service Center is requesting a grant of \$25,000 from the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

These funds will be used for mechanical and structural analysis, conceptual design and cost estimates for the rehabilitation of the Old Kent School in Charlestown. This building housed the Kennedy Center's Headstart and Day Care Programs until December, 1987 when a fire rendered the building uninhabitable.

Mr. Robert Kenney of the Kenney Development Company has agreed to provide management for this phase of the project. We hope to have a development plan within sixty days.

As you well know, the Kennedy Center has been an important resource for the Charlestown community for the past 27 years. While we are attempting to make do in the interim, it is imperative for the 150 families we serve each year that we have a facility that is fully operational by October 1, 1988.

We very much appreciate the cooperation and support we have received from the BRA staff in this matter. If there is any further information which would assist you in your evaluation of our request, representatives from the Kennedy Center Board and staff are present today to answer questions.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this request.

Very truly yours,

James P. Travers, Jr.
Board of Directors

JPT/tc
0608B

John F. Kennedy Family Service Center, Inc.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

The Kennedy Center's Early Childhood Programs include HEADSTART, a half-day program for children ages 3 to 5 from low-income families, and PRE-SCHOOL DAY CARE, a full day program for children ages 3 to 5 from families with working parents.

HEADSTART is in session from September through June and follows the Boston Public Schools calendar. There are 107 children enrolled.

PRE-SCHOOL DAY CARE is in session year round having only 10 holidays. There are 32 children enrolled.

Within an educational setting the program provides comprehensive services including a positive educational and psychosocial group experience as preparation for entrance into the public school system. Screenings for hearing, vision, dental health, speech and language, blood pressure and mental health provide early identification, and in many cases prevention, of health problems.

All of the families are either blue-collar workers earning less than \$11,200 per year for a family of four or are AFDC recipients. One hundred of the families are headed by a single female parent. Ninety per cent of the families live in low-income or subsidized housing.

The Charlestown community has traditionally been known to have a high incidence of alcoholism and violence. In recent years the incidence of use of street drugs has been very much on the rise. Child abuse and neglect are also on the rise in Charlestown. In 1987 there were 12 cases of child abuse and/or neglect reported to the state by our staff on behalf of children enrolled in Headstart/Day Care.

Approximately 75% of the children enrolled in the Headstart/Day Care programs display early signs of trauma caused by living in dysfunctional families. Some examples are lack of trust in adults, destructive ways of gaining attention and rigidity and compulsiveness. This program may be the only structure and consistency these children have in their lives. Since the fire which destroyed the school there has been an increase in bed wetting and fearful behaviors reported by parents and displayed at school.

Currently the 32 children in the Pre-School Day Care program are in school at the only other location belonging to the Kennedy Center which is licensed by the Office for Children. Of the 107 children enrolled in Headstart 43 have dropped out of the program to attend kindergarten in the Boston Public Schools. The remaining 64 children recently returned to school in space temporarily donated to us by the Flatley Company.



Carol Greese with some of her children: Timothy, 6, Andrew (in his mother's arms), 7 months, Lauren, 7, and Jimmy, 11. SHAP PHOTO BY JUDITH SHAPIRO

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Family

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ago as a pre-school program, for culturally and economically deprived children, created and funded by the federal government under the Johnson administration.

As she talked, seated in the newly-opened facility, 10 or so toddlers ambled through the modern hallway. They are led by a teacher on their way to the bathroom. The tots appear oblivious to all goings-on and occasionally glance precariously close to objects of potential harm—like sharp edges of a table at eye level—but just miss. One of the children is Grace's son Steven, 4, who resembles Charlie Brown. He glances stiffly-eyed in his mama's direction. This is perhaps the troupe's third trip to the john.

Weak knees, some of these kids, says Charleston Headstart Director Anne Gill, sitting nearby. It seems one talent Grace's kids have gathered from their time in Headstart is painting. All are miniature Picasso, says mom. Much of the but work that hangs in Grace's room, which she calls the "art room," was painted while the kids were in Headstart.

"Yellowing fading but they're still there," she says. Naturally, when asked to immortalize her family in art, "My daughter Paula depicted a pig."

around her?"

They are the same as other children, except, Grace believes, a little more cooperative.

"They all looked the same. They all had four front teeth missing and just their little fangs would show when they smiled," says Peggy Cochran, a Headstart teacher for 19 years, she taught three of Grace's kids. "They were shy at first but then very affectionate."

Last year Cochran had Timothy Grace, who she describes as "a character," and "one of my favorites."

From the looks of it, the Grace children are also brighter.

All have scored at least four grades higher than average in reading tests. And Laura, James and Paula, in second, fourth and sixth grade, respectively, are all in advanced classes.

"My kids like to read. I probably spend \$100 per month on books," she likes to buy the books so her children can keep and read them over, finally passing the dog-eared copies to the next sibling.

Steven, his mom's only offspring currently in the program, has learned how to interact effectively with children his own age. In essence, the mother seems to have gained the concept of public and private image. Social skills, they might be called. Grace talks of her surprise as she watched her son play happily with other children of her shock at the sight of the kid she knew so well suddenly becoming an orderly child putting away blocks after he was done playing. "He wouldn't do that at home," she admits.

Grace and Gill have high praise for Headstart, as Grace's kids have reaped the program's benefits since its inception.

In addition, "The kids are sick less in first grade," Gill says. "They've gotten all the childhood diseases. They use all of our Kleenex." And they learn good habits, including the habitual nature of school, and later,

work. "They gotta go every day."

Good dietary habits apparently come with the territory, too. Grace says her children drink milk at home because it was served at the program. They also eat less salt and sugar.

Gill calls Headstart "an investment in children." She figures the investment is always substantially returned to the community in terms of reduction of crime and of abusive parents, later on. She points out that abuse in family situations is often a result in parents who lack self-esteem. If Headstart promotes anything, it is self pride and esteem.

Getting a Headstart

By Mary Grimmer
Ledger Staff

In her loose pasted flowered dress, long brown hair tied in a haphazard bun, Carol Greese seems the quintessential of the hippie-era label, earth mother.

The mother fits Grace's countenance is soft and friendly, mouth and blue eyes smiling, and she is surprisingly calm. For this 38-1 just like kids" is the not unexpected response of this lifetime Charleston resident. She has eight boys and two girls. "I wanted it the other way around," she admits.

Grace and her husband live in the Mishawun housing development. Her husband Joseph, 39, is a disabled Vietnam veteran.

The children, who range in age from seven months to 19 years, are normal and healthy. They hail from a single-brotherly disadvantaged home, money-wise, but have been imbued with more than enough affection.

Grace has experienced what Grace feels is an advantage: each is a product of two years of pre-school in the Charleston Headstart program, currently housed temporarily in the renovated former Schreffels candy factory, in office space donated until June by developer Thomas Flately.

The original Headstart facility in the old Kent School burned last December. After June, the approximately 100 students will be centerless again, forced to hunt new digs.

Headstart began about 24 years

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Charleston Ledger
3/4/88



MARY AREYZAGA, 21, and JESSICA, 3, Bunker Hill Public Housing Project, Charlestown

Charlestown is changing all around Mary Areyzaga. "I was born here. I'm in Townie. There's a lot of new people here. They're putting condos up and down the streets here. I said they're putting the condos up in the wrong place. But people are buying them. I don't understand it."

Areyzaga was taking accounting and business courses at Bunker Hill Community College to help change her life. She recently had to drop out because the Head Start program where her daughter was enrolled closed after fire. She hopes she will be able to resume her studies in the new semester.

"I want to start my life on track again. I want to get a good job so that I can get out of here and have a better life for Jessica than I had growing up." She wants to get out quickly before her toddler daughter becomes old enough to be afraid, or worse.

"The environment here is bad," she said. "There's a lot of trouble with kids. Killings. Shootings. Some of these shootings they find out it's the wrong person they've gone after."

"At the beginning of last winter we heard shooting and this guy dropped it front of my window in the parking lot out here."

What was the shooting about?
"Drugs," she said.



Mary Areyzaga and her daughter, Jessica.

Globe staff photo Wendy Macchia

Barbara Burke 1/88



Bunker Hill Health Center

MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL

11 HIGH STREET, CHARLESTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02129 / 242-5700

March 9, 1988

Kate McDonough
Executive Director
Kennedy Center
27 Winthrop Street
Charlestown, MA 02129

Dear Kate:

This letter is to let you know again just how important the Head Start Program has been to the children of Charlestown. As you know, the long relationship of the program with the Bunker Hill Health Center Pediatric Unit has been an excellent model for cooperation between community service agencies. The need for a facility to match the standards of your program is very acute now due to your recent loss. Therefore, it is imperative you receive support for a continuation of the Head Start Program.

Sincerely,

Ralph E. Minear MD

Ralph E. Minear, M.D.
Unit Chief, Pediatrics

REM:mnv

cc: Roger Sweet, M.D.
Peggy Carolan





Bunker Hill Health Center

MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL

8 HIGH STREET, CHARLESTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02129 / 242-5700

March 8, 1988

Kate McDonough
Executive Director
Kennedy Center
27 Winthrop Street
Charlestown, MA 02129

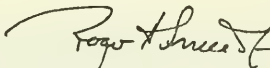
Dear Kate:

As Director of the Massachusetts General Hospital Community Health Associates, which includes the Bunker Hill Health Center in Charlestown, it gives me great pleasure to support your application for a planning grant to help in the redevelopment of the Charlestown Head Start and day care program.

I have been affiliated with the Bunker Hill Health Center since 1968, and have followed the development of the Kennedy Center Head Start Program over many years. I have been deeply impressed by the continued success of that program which has reached so many children over the years from our community of Charlestown.

I sincerely hope that the Kennedy Center Head Start Program receives the funding necessary to plan and develop a new space soon in the aftermath of the devastating pre-Christmas fire.

Sincerely,



Roger H. Sweet, M.D.
Director
MGH-Community Health Associates

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